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**POPULAR SONGS AS VEHICLES FOR
POLITICAL IMAGINATION:
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE FINNISH CIVIL WAR
IN FINNISH SONG PAMPHLETS, 1917–1918***

The rule of rogues is now ended,
as our country is ruled by
the government of men,
by the People's Delegation,
and therefore we rejoice!

Yet a battle still lies before us
until the hiding places, the nooks
are empty, until the bourgeoisie,
its rabble of villains,
is disarmed and harmless.

With these verses from “The Finnish Spring,” the songwriter David Lauri Leivo called workers to arms in March 1918, during the first decisive battles of the Finnish Civil War. The militant verses were included in a small collection of songs titled *Lahtarikenraali Mannerheimin husaarit* (The Hussars of Butcher-General Mannerheim). This eight-page pamphlet

* The author acknowledges the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions.

circulated in southern Finland, which was controlled by the socialist Red Guards.¹ By means of moral polarization, mockery of the bourgeois enemy, and glorification of the proletarian struggle against oppression, the song pamphlet reflected and boosted the revolutionary mood among the Reds. Because the pamphlet marked out Leivo as a Red sympathizer, the question naturally arises of what happened to him when the Whites crushed the socialist revolutionaries only a month later. His verses also raise more general questions about the role of popular songs in revolutionary mobilization and political propaganda.

In this article, I explore how printed songs published in 1917 and 1918 reflected and in turn affected the ongoing revolutionary situation and political imagination in Finland. I argue that the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the Finnish Civil War of 1918 became key events that activated the publishing and performance of songs from popular song pamphlets. I also show how the content, functions, and performance contexts of these songs were essentially molded by the revolutionary events. Acting as an affective medium, the songs contested old forms of political legitimacy and introduced and reinforced new ideas of statehood based on class solidarity and national unity.²

Song pamphlets as a form of popular culture

The sources of this study consist of song collections similar to *Lahtarikenraali Mannerheimin husaarit* – inexpensive short pamphlets, which are known in Finnish as *arkkiveisut* and in Swedish as *skillingtryck*. Such song pamphlets had a long history in Europe and North America, constituting one of the most common types of printed material from the early modern period to the nineteenth century. The term *arkkiveisut* is often translated into English as “broadsides,” though their physical appearance is different from the artifacts known as broadsides in British culture. The main difference is that the Finnish versions of broadsides were not printed on one side of a single sheet of paper, but were printed on both sides and folded into a pamphlet of four, eight, or sixteen pages. They included the lyrics of one or several

¹ David Leivo. *Lahtarikenraali Mannerheimin husaarit*, Pappien valitusvirsi y.m. Helsinki, 1918. Pp. 3–5.

² For fruitful ideas on popular songs as an affective medium, see Serguei Alex Oushakine. *Emotional Blueprints: War Songs as an Affective Medium* // Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol (Eds.). *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*. DeKalb, 2011. Pp. 248–276.

Vallankumousrunoja ja vapaa-aatteisia lauluja IV



Lahtarikenraali Mannerheimin husaarit, Pappien valitusvirsi y. m.

Kirjoittanut DAVID LEIVO

Kustannusliike ERIO Helsinki

Hinta 30 p:niä

Fig. 1. The cover of David Lauri Leivo's song pamphlet published during the Finnish Civil War (source: The National Library of Finland, Kansalaissota: Eino Mikkola's collection).

songs, but no melody notes. Sometimes the songs could include references to familiar tunes to which the lyrics could be sung.³ When no particular melody was specified, the users were supposed to learn the melody of each song by ear or find a well-known popular melody for the song themselves.

The publication of such song pamphlets proliferated dramatically in Finland in the late nineteenth century. Simultaneously, their content shifted from religious to secular and thematic songs.⁴ In the early twentieth century, the content of song pamphlets was increasingly influenced by the emergent culture of comic singing (*kuplettilaulu*), marked by the theatrical performance of cleverly ambiguous, political, or satirical verses. These comical songs were sung as distinct numbers in theaters, restaurants, and public parks. They could be heard also at soirées (*iltamat*) and other events organized by political or civic organizations, which used them as entertaining intermediate acts between the more serious-minded and edifying numbers. The performers of comic songs included professional artists as well as amateurs – members of various voluntary associations.⁵ Pamphlets became an important vehicle, but not the only one, for the distribution of comical songs, which were also published in the pages of satirical magazines and newspapers.

Besides their direct purpose of aiding singers, song pamphlets played a role in political mass mobilization and propaganda in the early twentieth century. At the time, choral singing became an integral element of radical workers' rallies – meetings, marches, and demonstrations – in Finland and the whole Russian Empire.⁶ In the wake of the October General Strike of 1905, broadly circulated song pamphlets helped to popularize old and new workers' anthems all over Finland in the form of printed songbooks.⁷ Revolutionary songs helped to create bonds of solidarity within political

³ See Jyrki Hakapää. *Arkkiyeisut* // Lea Laitinen and Anna Kuismin (Eds.). *Kynällä kyntäjät*. Helsinki, 2013. P. 222; Karin Strand. *Street Ballads Spreading the Word. The Case of "The Two Maids Who Married Each Other"* // Ann-Catrine Edlund, T. G. Ashplant, and Anna Kuismin (Eds.). *Reading and Writing from Below. Exploring the Margins of Modernity*. Umeå, 2016. Pp. 150–151.

⁴ E.g., Hakapää. *Arkkiyeisut*. Pp. 224–226.

⁵ Mikko-Olavi Seppälä. *Venäläissotilas suomalaisissa kupleteissa* // *Idäntutkimus*. 2016. No. 3. Pp. 44–48.

⁶ Deborah Pearl. *Creating a Culture of Revolution: Workers and the Revolutionary Movement in Late Imperial Russia*. Bloomington, 2015. Pp. 145–205; Vesa Kurkela & Saijaleena Rantanen. *Laulava vallankumous* // Pertti Haapala, et al. (Eds.). *Kansa kaikkivaltias. Suurlakko Suomessa 1905*. Helsinki, 2008. Pp. 178–194.

⁷ Some of them were included in the song collections examined in this article. Cf.: Jali Joutsen. *Punakaartilaisten marssi*. 2nd ed. Porvoo, 1918.

groups, along with banners and flags (whether the revolutionary red or the Finnish “lion” flag), which themselves were novelties at political events.⁸

The post-1905 period also witnessed the rise of the party press, particularly socialist newspapers. This powerful propaganda tool introduced workers to new political concepts and symbols and endowed topical events with political meanings.⁹ Though the bourgeois press blamed socialist newspapers for inciting class hatred, the socialist newspapers continued to support parliamentarism over revolutionary violence, even during the upheaval of 1917. After the outbreak of the Civil War, however, the socialist newspapers aligned with the revolution, considering it necessary to defend the working class from bourgeois attack.¹⁰ With its extensive circulation during the revolutionary period, the socialist press was likely to have had considerable influence on song pamphlet producers, even though not all of the latter were socialist sympathizers or sought audiences primarily among the supporters of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Most producers of song pamphlets were not professional songwriters; they composed verses as a hobby to make some extra money. This highly heterogeneous milieu that included both men and a few women consisted of skilled and unskilled workers, artisans, civil servants, and self-employed professionals. Many lived mobile lives and periodically changed jobs. These general observations are still insufficient to create a meaningful social profile of popular songwriters, as many of them published their texts anonymously or under a pseudonym.¹¹ We only know the identities of around half of the songwriters who were active in 1917 and 1918. The only identifiable woman in this cohort was Ida Sofia Kumpulainen, who supported herself as a dependent lodger and peddler.¹²

Song collections were a popular commodity at fairs and other public events where people could sing songs from recently purchased pamphlets. During the revolutionary mobilization of 1917 and 1918, song pamphlet vendors also perceived political rallies and demonstrations as good sales

⁸ Tuomas Tepora. Lippu, uhri, kansakunta. Ryhmäkokemukset ja -rajat Suomessa 1917–1945. Helsinki, 2011.

⁹ E.g., Wiktor Marzec and Risto Turunen. Socialisms in the Tsarist Borderlands: Poland and Finland in a Contrastive Comparison, 1830–1907 // Contributions to the History of Concepts. 2018. Vol. 13. No. 1. Pp. 41–47.

¹⁰ Juha Matikainen. Parlamentarismin kannattajasta vallankumouksen äänitorveksi. Suomen Sosialidemokraattisen Puolueen lehdistö 1917–1918. Jyväskylä, 2018.

¹¹ Hakapää. Arkkiveisut. Pp. 227–229.

¹² Ida Sofia Kumpulainen. Sota ja patteryö. Helsinki, 1917; Savo. 1910. No. 72. June 30. P. 2. “Dependent lodger” meant a farm worker who did not own any land but lived on a farm.

venues. The commercial nature of song pamphlets significantly affected their content: to appeal to potential buyers, the songs had to resonate with customers' experiences and imaginations. Therefore, the content of the songs perhaps reveals less about the worldviews or political ideas of the songwriters than about what they assumed were popular tastes and expectations, which, in turn, were shaped by the long-standing song pamphlet tradition. It implied stable elements of songwriting such as concise yet comprehensible storytelling and highly emotional content drawing on sensation, fear, sentimentality, and moral polarization.¹³

The tradition of the Finnish song pamphlet is more often than not studied in a Nordic or Western European context. What is often overlooked is this Finnish tradition's broader Russian cultural context and mutual influences. In Russia, among the equivalents of the songs from Finnish popular pamphlets were the *chastushki* – highly rhythmic, humorous folk songs – the lyrics of which were often printed in newspapers and magazines.¹⁴ *Chastushki* became common among peasants and urban workers in the late nineteenth century and they peaked in popularity during the early Soviet period. They deployed a wide spectrum of genres, including political satire. Scholars such as William B. Husband have underlined how *chastushki* increasingly turned into propaganda tools in the wake of the October Revolution.¹⁵ Something similar happened to song pamphlets in Finland. The possible influence of Russian *chastushki* and other popular song genres of the early twentieth century on the melodies and lyrics of Finnish popular pamphlet songs is an understudied topic that requires a special study.

The content of the songs: From revolutionary zeal to sorrow and retribution

The number of song pamphlets published yearly in Finland varied from a few to a dozen in the early twentieth century. Against this dynamic, the year

¹³ Strand. *Street Ballads Spreading the Word*. Pp. 151, 162.

¹⁴ *Chastushki* were simple four-line verses, which could be delivered in sequence to form a song, in which case they resembled the typical form of a Finnish song pamphlet tune. For *chastushki* see Catriona Kelly. *Popular culture* // Nicholas Rzhevsky (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*. Cambridge, 1998. Pp. 143–144.

¹⁵ William B. Husband. *Mythical Communities and the New Soviet Woman: Bolshevik Antireligious Chastushki, 1917–32* // *The Russian Review*. 2004. No. 1. Pp. 89–106. See also Robert A. Rothstein. *Death of the Folk Song?* // Stephen Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Eds.). *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*. Princeton, 1994. Pp. 114–120.

1917 stands out in striking contrast, with no less than 41 song pamphlets published. This increased publishing of song pamphlets continued into the following year marked by the Finnish Civil War, during which at least 14 new song pamphlets were released. These 55 collections include 160 songs and constitute an exhaustive sampling of the songs that were printed, sold, and sung at that time.¹⁶ Apart from one Swedish-language song pamphlet, all were published in Finnish. I found no Russian-language song pamphlets published in Finland during this period, though some might have been produced – for example, among the tens of thousands of Russian soldiers stationed in the Grand Duchy.

The overwhelming majority of the songs examined here are melodramatic in character. This means they were designed to appeal to the emotions through humor, drama, and the juxtaposition of good and evil. Another key feature of the songs is topicality. More than two-thirds of them (115 out of 160) address contemporary events such as revolutions, war, and economic crisis. In some song pamphlets, songs referring to social events alternate with purely lyrical ones, whereas in other pamphlets topical content is completely ignored. The nontopical songs raise traditional broadside themes such as love, courting, drinking, and vagabond or sailor life. The persistence of these themes during the turbulent time of 1917–1918 suggests that the revolution and civil war did not end people's yearning for light amusement; for some, song pamphlets may even have served as an escape from the calamities of daily life.

The songs included in the pamphlets published in 1917 were written under the impact of the February Revolution leading to the abdication of the emperor Nicholas II. In the Grand Duchy of Finland, the revolution manifested itself in demonstrations, mass rallies, and the removal of unpopular tsarist officials and policemen. The new Russian Provisional Government restored extensive self-rule to Finland and allowed the convening of the Finnish Parliament, in which Social Democrats held a majority. Freedom of assembly and the press were introduced and the wartime censorship was eased. All these factors inspired songwriters – now enjoying unprecedented freedom – to address ongoing political developments. The proliferation of various public events in the wake of the revolution provided an extensive market for selling song pamphlets and venues for performing the songs.

¹⁶ This sampling constitutes the main pool of sources for my study and includes all the song pamphlets from this period preserved in the collections of the National Library of Finland, the University Libraries of Jyväskylä and Turku, the Finnish Literature Society, and the People's Archives in Helsinki.

Hence, it was only a few weeks before the first postrevolutionary song pamphlets emerged.¹⁷

The most common themes of the song pamphlets of 1917 are the fall of the tsarist regime and the misdeeds of the imperial authorities. These themes recur in dozens of songs, most of which represent the February Revolution as a positive moment of liberation that ended the oppression of Finns by the tsarist government.¹⁸ At the same time, conspicuously, the 1917 songs do not unequivocally call for the independence of Finland; rather, they envision a continuing relationship between Finland and Russia. Apparently, the songwriters and their audiences had difficulties imagining the total secession of Finland from the Russian Empire.

Besides the revolution, several songs address World War I, which was ongoing, and its impact on ordinary people's lives in the forms of food and housing shortages, profiteering, hunger, and unemployment. These themes characterized the popular culture of the time in all European countries, so Finnish songs were by no means unique in this respect. What distinguished them was their predominantly negative attitude toward the prolonged war.¹⁹ In contrast to many song pamphlets published at the beginning of the war, they no longer praised the Russian war efforts.²⁰ Nor did the songs from 1917 demonize the enemy – Germany – whereas earlier in the war, Finnish songs tended to share the inclination in contemporary Russian popular culture to dehumanize the German troops and Kaiser Wilhelm II.²¹ This shift in tone could be a result of the easing of wartime censorship, suspicious of old cultural sympathies toward Germany in Finland. This radical change even sparked rumors in 1917 about a possible German invasion.²² However,

¹⁷ E.g., Oskar Syvänen. *Reissusällin tervehdys*. Helsinki, dated March 30, 1917; *Ilmoituksia // Kansan Lehti*. 1917. April 20. No. 91. P. 4.

¹⁸ *Eksymä. Uuden ajan koittaessa // Aikamme lauluja*. Wiipuri, 1917; *Vanha veitikka. Vapausviisuja. Iloisia ja ivalisia*. Helsinki, 1917.

¹⁹ E.g., Lauri Leivo. *Yhä vieläkö verta // Vallankumourunvoja ja vapaa-aatteisia lauluja II*. Helsinki, 1917. An exception is Gustaf Rosenberg's song about the February Revolution and its influence on Finland, which ends with the wish for Russia's rapid victory over its enemy. Gustaf Rosenberg. *Laulu vallankumouksesta Venäjällä ja sen seurauksista Suomessa*. Tampere, 1917.

²⁰ Cf. Heikki Nurhonen. *Lauluja ja taisteluvauksia Maaailmansodasta*. Helsinki, 1914.

²¹ For Russian attitudes toward Germany during the war, see Hubertus S. Jahn. *For Tsar and Fatherland? Russian Popular Culture and the First World War // Frank and Steinberg (Eds.). Cultures in Flux*. 1994. Pp. 133–134.

²² Samu Nyström. *Poikkeusajan kaupunkielämäkerta: Helsinki ja helsinkiläiset maailmansodassa 1914–1918*. Helsinki, 2013. Pp. 172–173. For sympathy toward Germany

hostility to Germany and mocking of Wilhelm II returned to Finnish song pamphlets during the Civil War of 1918.²³ This was a reaction to Germany's military support for the Whites and the aspirations of many White leaders to turn Finland into a monarchy with a German prince as king.²⁴

Another indicator of the extensive politicization of Finnish popular songs of the time was the frequent mention of public figures. The former emperor Nicholas II was mentioned most often (in 12 songs out of the total of 160 in my sampling). Songs portray him either as a cruel oppressor or a tragicomic figure, a cuckold and a lousy ruler unable to grasp the problems of the empire. Another popular protagonist of the songs is Grigori Rasputin, the charismatic intimate adviser to the imperial family, who was assassinated on the eve of the February Revolution. In Russia, Rasputin's personality was mythologized and embroiled in numerous rumors, many of which fall into the category of political pornography.²⁵ Judging by the 1917 song pamphlets, the Finnish public was also captivated by this scandalous figure. Rasputin appears in no less than eight comic songs, which depict him as a thief, a drunkard, and a deceitful sexual predator who manipulates the court and fornicates with the empress, princesses, and aristocratic ladies. To publishers of song pamphlets, Rasputin was an ideal protagonist: a real folk hero (or rather antihero), who attracted both working-class and bourgeois audiences.

Besides Rasputin and the royal family, the song pamphlets demonstrate good knowledge of top officials of the Russian Empire, such as its last minister of the interior, Alexander Protopopov, or the governor-general of Finland, Franz Seyn. Both are depicted as ruthless oppressors who deserved their downfall and prosecution at the hands of the revolutionary regime.²⁶ Of the new revolutionary Russian government, the songs mention only Alexander Kerensky. In contrast to the obsession with Kerensky in Russian popular culture of the period, in Finnish songs he is treated no better than

among Finnish politicians, see Pasi Ihalainen. *The Springs of Democracy: National and Transnational Debates on Constitutional Reform in the British, German, Swedish and Finnish Parliaments, 1917–1919*. Helsinki, 2017. P. 64.

²³ E.g., E. Järvinen. *Politiikkaa // Rintamalla syntyneitä kumouslauluja*. 1918. Pp. 3–4.

²⁴ For Finland's turn towards Germany in 1918, see Marjaliisa Hentilä and Seppo Hentilä. *Saksalainen Suomi 1918*. Helsinki, 2016.

²⁵ Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii. *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917*. New Haven, 1999. Pp. 9–14, 76–89.

²⁶ E.g., Jussi. *Suursiivous*. Tampere, 1917; Vanha veitikka. *Seynin surkeus // Vapausviisuja*. Iloisia ja ivallisia. Helsinki, 1917. Pp. 4–5.

tsarist officials.²⁷ This negative attitude to Kerensky, particularly strong among Finnish workers, was provoked by his interventionist stance vis-à-vis Finnish autonomy, which culminated in the dissolution of the Finnish Parliament in the summer of 1917.²⁸ The scorn for Kerensky that developed in Finland during 1917 was later encapsulated in a famous song, “Ai, ai Kerenski” (Oh, oh Kerensky), the melody of which was borrowed from a popular Russian two-step dance “Karapet.”²⁹ This song became a dance hit all over Finland in 1919 due to its acrid mockery of Kerensky’s nationality policy and his eventual escape from Russia.³⁰

The song pamphlets of 1917 pay less attention to Finnish political figures than to Russian imperial personages. The only Finnish political leader mentioned in more than one song is Oskari Tokoi, the Social Democratic prime minister between March and September 1917. The songs invest great hope in him and call for support of his government.³¹ The unquestionable sympathy toward Tokoi reveals much about the political sympathies of songwriters or at least those of their intended audience. Indeed, most of the songs that tackled the sociopolitical tension of 1917 adopt a working-class perspective and blame the bourgeoisie for the escalating problems. A notable exception to this trend was the song pamphlet “Talonpojan arvo” (The value of the farmer). Rather than appealing to potential supporters of the SDP, this song sympathized with the plight of landowning farmers, who, amid the escalating food crisis, found themselves caught in the crossfire of the mutually contradictory demands of capitalists and socialists.³²

As 1917 progressed, the pessimism and militance of political song pamphlets grew. The initial optimism about the prospects of national

²⁷ E.g., K. A. Gustafsson. *Porvarien uni* // *Ajan aallot*. Helsinki, 1917. Pp. 6–8. For the cult of Kerensky in Russia, see, e.g., Boris Kolonitskii. *Russian Leaders of the Great War and Revolutionary Era* // Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G. Marks and Melissa K. Stockdale (Eds.). *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914–22*. Book 2: *Popular Culture, Identities, Mentalities, and Memory*. Indiana, 2014. Pp. 38–44.

²⁸ Sami Suodenjoki and Risto Turunen. *Johdanto: työväki, valta ja vapaus vuonna 1917* // Suodenjoki and Turunen (Eds.). *Työväki kumouksessa*. Helsinki, 2017. Pp. 13–15.

²⁹ This tune of Armenian, Ukrainian, or Klezmer origin became popular empire-wide by the turn of the century. The “universally familiar” status of the tune was documented by the writer Alexander Kuprin in his famous 1909 novel *The Pit* (see Alexander Kuprin. *Yama: The Pit*. Honolulu, 2001. P. 119).

³⁰ For the spread of the song, see Uusi Kotka. 1919. September 1. No. 97. P. 3.

³¹ E.g., Vanha veitikka. *Tokoin senaatti* // *Vapausviisuja*. Vakavia, iloisia ja ivallisia. II sarja. Helsinki, 1917. Pp. 3–4.

³² Sanfrid Takala. *Talonpojan arvo*. Tampere, 1917.

independence and social justice prevalent in the wake of the February Revolution was giving way to the fear of restoration of the old power relations. This change reflects the socialists' growing disillusionment with the Finnish political system after the dissolution of the Finnish Parliament and the ensuing defeat of the Social Democrats in the parliamentary election of October 1917. The radicalizing impact of these two events manifested itself in K. A. Gustafsson's song "Porvarien uni" (The dream of the bourgeoisie), published immediately after the election. Once again condemning the dissolution of parliament, the song focused on the rumored collusion of the Finnish bourgeoisie with the Russian authorities aimed at manipulating the election results in their favor. The song also mocked Finnish *manttaali-papat* (landed old men) for overlooking the alleged election fraud because of their antisocialist attitudes.³³ By promoting such claims, the song was stirring anger and resentment toward bourgeois political groups among the audience and questioning the legitimacy of the new parliament with its bourgeois majority.

Song pamphlets reflected the growing polarization and animosity within society also by introducing new terms. One such neologism was *gulassi* or *gulassiparoni* (goulash baron), which referred to profiteers in the black market food trade.³⁴ The notion was borrowed from Scandinavia, where the goulash baron had become a widespread topos in popular literature and entertainment shows during World War I.³⁵ In Finnish song pamphlets, the goulash barons symbolized the evil capitalism that was driving workers to misery.

Another derogative term that gained popularity in pamphlets was *lahtarit* (butchers), which referred to the paramilitary units organized by the bourgeoisie in late 1917.³⁶ This term had been used for the first time by Finnish

³³ K. A. Gustafsson. *Porvarien uni // Ajan aallot*. Helsinki, 1917. Pp. 6–8. For the rumor, see Työmies. 1917. October 7. No. 270. P. 1.

³⁴ Cf.: Masala. *Kulassiparooni // Ivalauluja I*. Helsinki, 1917; Koito. *Muisto-Runo Köyhälistön Suurlakosta Marraskuulla v. 1917*. Tampere, 1917. P. 3.

³⁵ Bjarne Søndergaard Bendtsen. *Neutral Merchant Seamen at War: The Experiences of Scandinavian Seamen during the First World War // Claes Ahlund (Ed.). Scandinavia in the First World War*. Lund, 2012. P. 347; Nyström. *Poikkeusajan kaupunkielämäkerta*. P. 83.

³⁶ Masala. *Lahtarin valitus // Ivalauluja I*. Helsinki, 1917; Kulkuri-Kalle. *Veisu Malmin mellakoista ja Lahtarien urotöistä*. Helsinki, [1917]. For the formation of paramilitary units in Finland, see Pertti Haapala and Marko Tikka. *Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918 // Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Eds.). War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*. Oxford, 2012. Pp. 79–80.

socialist leaders during the General Strike of 1905 to denote bourgeois voluntary guards,³⁷ and it became a widespread nickname for the White troops during the Finnish Civil War.³⁸ For a songwriter to adopt the term meant identifying with the socialists or at least appealing to organized labor. A case in point is Lauri Leivo's "Laulu 'lahtarikaartista'" (Song about the "butcher guard"), which was published just before the outbreak of the Civil War and became a best seller in Red Finland.³⁹

The term *Bolshevik* appeared in the song pamphlets around the time of the Russian October Revolution, in the song "Taantumuksen runo" (A poem of reaction), which depicts the suffering of the people under oppressive rule and their hope for the return of democracy. The song ends with the prophecy that "the sweet day will come, when the Bolsheviks will rule."⁴⁰ This is a vivid example of a song pamphlet promptly reflecting the growing radicalization of the Finnish socialist political milieu, parallel with the Bolshevik coup in Russia.⁴¹ After this first instance, the term *Bolshevik* appeared in no other leftist songs published during the following months. It was mentioned during the Finnish Civil War only in song pamphlets that condemned the Red revolutionaries and equated them with the Russian Bolsheviks.⁴²

The Finnish Civil War was the central theme of the song pamphlets published in 1918. When the war broke out at the end of January, the Red revolutionaries took over southern Finland, whereas the old government moved to Vaasa on the west coast and began forming the White army to suppress the rebellion. The Whites also started disarming the Russian troops that were still in Finland. After three months of fighting, the Reds were defeated. Casualties among the combatants reached 9,500, of whom 5,700 were Reds. In addition, 11,000 people, most of whom identified as Reds, lost their lives when they became victims of political and personal reprisals. In

³⁷ Antti Kujala. *Vastakkainasettelun yhteiskunnan synty. Syksyn 1905 suurlakko Helsingissä ja muualla Suomessa*. Helsinki, 2016. Pp. 203, 206.

³⁸ Tuomas Tepora. *The Mystified War: Regeneration and Sacrifice* // Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius (Eds.). *The Finnish Civil War 1918*. Leiden, 2014. P. 165.

³⁹ David L. Leivo. Viimeinen melske, *Laulu "lahtarikaartista"*. Helsinki, 1918; *Työmies*. 1918. January 22. No. 20. P. 6.

⁴⁰ K. A. Gustafsson. *Taantumuksen runo* // *Elämän taistelu*. Helsinki, 1917. P. 8. The publication of the song pamphlet was advertised in *Työmies*. 1917. November 10. No. 304. P. 8.

⁴¹ Ihalainen. *The Springs of Democracy*. Pp. 256–287.

⁴² E.g., *Sota lauluja* // *Sota-lauluja*. Viipuri, 1918. P. 4; Matti Ovaska. *Ensimäinen laulu* // *Kaksi laulua*. Helsinki, 1918. P. 5.

the aftermath of the war, the prison camps in which 80,000 suspected Reds had been interned witnessed a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe: some 12,500 prisoners died due to diseases and malnutrition.⁴³ All these dramatic events were prominently featured in popular songs.

Most of the songs published during the war displayed a strong political bias. David Lauri Leivo's "The Hussars of Butcher-General Mannerheim" is representative of the radical pro-Red stance. Leivo castigated the brutality of the White troops by employing rumors from the early period of the Finnish Civil War. The song describes the aftermath of the battle of Lyly in mid-March 1918, from the viewpoint of a White soldier:

We had a maneuver in Lyly recently,
quite a famous one!
We floated prisoners in a hole in the ice,
burned and cut them.
Hurrah! The boys of Mannerheim!
Hey, how glorious they already are!
These troops of ours, whooping with joy,
they pulled a dead man in their sleigh.⁴⁴

Underscoring the appalling remorselessness of the Whites, Leivo's song was in line with the concurrent propaganda of Red newspapers and leaflets. Several other song pamphlets followed suit by dehumanizing the Whites.⁴⁵ However, the Civil War also inspired a number of pro-White songs. They presented the Reds as lazy, crude bandits who were lured to violence by their devious leaders.⁴⁶ A typical example is "The Revolutionary Song of Finland: Verses in Memory of the Fallen Villainous Rule," published under the pseudonym Vekara (Kid) shortly after the defeat of the Reds. This explicitly antisocialist song starts by depicting the collapse of imperial rule in Russia and the infiltration of revolutionary ideas in the heads of "the Pope and the Cardinals," that is, the leaders of the Finnish SDP:

⁴³ Marko Tikka. *Warfare and Terror in 1918* // Tepora and Roselius (Eds.). *The Finnish Civil War 1918*. Pp. 90–118.

⁴⁴ David Leivo. *Lahtarikenraali Mannerheimin husaarit*. P. 4.

⁴⁵ *Rintamalla syntyneitä kumouslauluja*. [Place of publication unknown], 1918; Oskar Syvänen. *Senaatin polska v. 1918*. Helsinki, 1918.

⁴⁶ E.g., Tosi sosialisti. *Punasten pullistus eli viisu viekkaista rosvoista*. Helsinki, dated 12 April 1918. See also Vesa Kurkela. *Sisällissodan laulut* // Pertti Haapala and Tuomas Hoppu (Eds.). *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*. Helsinki, 2009. Pp. 427–431.

The torch of their understanding dims, their reason stiffens,
the abscesses on their heads fester and their brains soften,
and the stench spreads.
This Red plague
poisons all the Land.⁴⁷

The song goes on to describe how the SDP leaders start to call for a world revolution and to push paupers to rebel. Encouraged by this incitement, the rebels “begin the stealing of arms and the shooting of the unarmed,” until the White Guard ends their ravaging and their “ideology falls flat like a bitter, enormous pancake.” Vekara’s song puts the blame for the Civil War mainly on the Finnish socialist leaders, but it also acknowledges the impact of their Russian role models and underlines the aid of Russian soldiers to the Red “cowards.”⁴⁸ Hence, the song ultimately taps into the main line of White propaganda, which emphasized the close connection between the Finnish Reds and the Russian soldiers, and even depicted them as one virtually inseparable group of “Red Russkies.”⁴⁹

It is possible even to speak of the rise of a new type of humorous song in 1918 depicting the Russian soldier as simultaneously a clownish figure and an exotic Other. Speaking an alien language, this figure posed a threat to Finns with his excessive sexual urge and violent behavior.⁵⁰ Both of these aspects appeared, for example, in Tatu Pekkarinen’s song, “Venäläinen sotilas Suomessa Kerenskin vallan aikana” (The Russian soldier in Finland during Kerensky’s reign), which refers to an earlier period. In the song, a Russian soldier praises Finland as a paradise: food and beautiful girls are abundant and there is no need to fear the dreadful Germans.⁵¹ Another song by Pekkarinen targets the “bride of a Russian,” a wanton Finnish girl who falls easily to Russian soldiers and is eventually left mourning when her lover leaves for the front.⁵² Scorn for the ill-behaving Finnish women is also characteristic of “Suomen tyttöjen kehtolaulu” (The lullaby of Finnish girls) by Oskar Syvänen. The song depicts the love of a Finnish girl for both

⁴⁷ Vekara. Suomen vallankumousveisu: säkeitä sortuneen roistovallan muistoksi. Turku, 1918.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ E.g., Tepora. The Mystified War. Pp. 164–167.

⁵⁰ Seppälä. Venäläissotilas suomalaisissa kupleteissa. Pp. 44–45.

⁵¹ Tatu Pekkarinen. Venäläinen sotilas Suomessa Kerenskin vallan aikana // Humoristisia lauluja No. 2. Kuopio, 1918. Pp. 3–6.

⁵² Idem. Kun Iivana lähti eli armaasta erottua // Humoristisia lauluja No. 1. Kuopio, 1918. Pp. 10–12.

a Chinese migrant worker and a Russian soldier, and the explicitly racist overtones in depicting the two lovers underscore her immoral behavior as a betrayal of the nation.⁵³

The songs about Russian soldiers and their Finnish “brides” tapped into anti-Russian attitudes that were quite noticeable in Finnish oral culture of the time. Originally fueled by the Russian integrationist policies of Nicholas II, these attitudes were reinforced after the February Revolution by the reduced discipline of the Russian troops, who were increasingly engaged in lawless acts and liaisons with Finnish women. However, the real surge of Russophobia took place only after the outbreak of the Civil War, when the Whites began exploiting the anti-Russian rhetoric in order to frame the confrontation as a War of Liberation and an interethnic conflict.⁵⁴ In song pamphlets, hostility toward Russians was expressed not only by directly denigrating Russian soldiers and their Finnish partners, but also through the growing use of the derogatory ethnonym *ryssä* (Russkie). Although *ryssä* appeared in only one song published in 1917, it was used in at least six songs released in 1918.

Another change the revolution brought to Finnish popular song culture concerned the attitude to religion. Given the long-term trend toward secularization of the song pamphlets, it comes as little surprise that only one of those published during 1917 included devotional songs.⁵⁵ What was really different now was the proliferation of explicitly anticlerical songs. One of them, titled “Antikristuksen ilmestys” (The revelation of the Antichrist) and written by David Lauri Leivo, depicted the so-called Helsinki church riots in May–June 1917. On several occasions, led by several intellectuals inspired by anarchist and Tolstoyan ideas, crowds of their supporters occupied Lutheran churches in the downtown. They interrupted the church service to allow their leaders to speak from the pulpit and they resisted attempts to restore order. These incidents were condemned even by the SDP,⁵⁶ but Leivo’s song unequivocally supported them. It treated the church riots as a blow against the stagnant institution

⁵³ Oskar Syvänen. *Suomen tyttöjen kehtolaulu // Senaatin polska v. 1918*. Helsinki, 1918. Pp. 12–15.

⁵⁴ Seppälä. *Venäläissotilas suomalaisissa kupleteissa*. Pp. 45, 50–52; Outi Karemaa. *Vihollisia, vainolaisia, syöpäläisiä: Venäläisviha Suomessa 1917–1923*. Helsinki, 1998. Pp. 29–30.

⁵⁵ J. L. Neljä hengellistä laulua. Pori, 1917.

⁵⁶ Anna Rajavuori. *Helsingin kirkkomellakat 1917 // Suodenjoki and Turunen (Eds.). Työväki kumouksessa*. Pp. 175–202.

of the church,⁵⁷ thus revealing an independent left-leaning stance, not bound by the official SDP position.

The dramatic upheaval of the Civil War inspired some songwriters to return to religious themes. In particular, songs by Matti Ovaska presented the ongoing war and escalating food shortage as God's punishment for the sins of secularism and the forsaking of religion.⁵⁸ In Ovaska's songs, religious views (Lutheran, also possibly influenced by revivalism) overlapped with political conservatism: he clearly sympathized with the Whites and blamed socialist ideas for the outbreak of civil war. This combination confirms the main trend described in historiography: the Lutheran church in general strongly supported the Whites during the Civil War, whereas the White political narratives drew on apocalyptic visions from the Bible.⁵⁹ The alliance between the church and the Whites was the target of a number of anticlerical leftist songs, particularly those written by Leivo.

A broad spectrum of traumatic civil war experiences – losing family members and friends, witnessing executions, or spending time in a prison camp – was reflected after the war only in the working-class oral tradition.⁶⁰ The songs representing this segment of Finnish popular culture have survived mostly in the form of handwritten manuscripts, which were nearly impossible to publish in the postwar political climate.⁶¹ It was not until 1919 that the theme of human suffering and loss made its way into song pamphlets. For example, Kustaa Salmi's song "Kuolleitten morsian" (The fiancée of the dead) depicts the grief of a woman whose fiancé falls in the Civil War. The song carefully avoids taking sides and does not even mention whether the fallen fiancé was a White or a Red.⁶² This neutrality is quite telling given that during the Civil War Salmi appealed to Red audiences with publication of the militant song "Sorrettujen marssi" (The march of the oppressed).⁶³

Kustaa Salmi's song is remarkable in one more aspect: it is a rare example of a female perspective on the events. The song pamphlets published in 1917

⁵⁷ Lauri Leivo. *Antikristuksen ilmestys // Uskonnonvapausrunoja ja lauluja I*. Helsinki, 1917.

⁵⁸ E.g., Matti Ovaska. *Neljä laulua*. Viipuri, 1918.

⁵⁹ See Niko Huttunen. *Raamatullinen sota. Raamatun käyttö ja vaikutus vuoden 1918 sisällissodan tulkinnoissa*. Helsinki, 2010.

⁶⁰ E.g., Andreas McKeough. *Kirjoittaan kerrottu sota*. Helsinki, 2017. Pp. 55, 63, 302. Raoul Palmgren. *Kapinalliset kynät I*. Porvoo, 1983. P. 350.

⁶¹ Kurkela. *Sisällissodan laulut*. Pp. 433–435.

⁶² Kustaa Salmi. *Kuolleitten morsian*. Helsinki, 1919.

⁶³ Kustaa Salmi. *Sorrettujen marssi // Näky Viipurissa*. Helsinki, 1918. Pp. 3–4.

include a few songs that depict women longing for love, gossiping about village affairs, or being forced into prostitution.⁶⁴ Some of these songs were also possibly intended to appeal to female audiences. Still, the male perspective dominated, even bordering on misogyny. Thus, the satirical song “Miesten surulaulu kun naispuolue perustetaan” (The dirge of men when a women’s party is established) was expected to produce a comic effect through the carnivalesque inversion of gender roles.⁶⁵ Finland became the first country to implement full universal suffrage in the wake of the Revolution of 1905, so in 1917, the song did not refer to any topical events other than the rising involvement of women in politics, which led Finnish suffragists to discuss the need to establish a women’s party.⁶⁶

Reaching and affecting the audience in a revolutionary atmosphere

Previous studies on Finnish song pamphlet culture have argued that when song pamphlets peaked in popularity during the late nineteenth century, they became the first form of print media produced and distributed by lower-class people, beyond the control of the educated elites.⁶⁷ The song pamphlets published in 1917 and 1918 seem to confirm this observation. However, a new reality of mass politics, revolution, and civil war somewhat altered the functions of song pamphlets and their connection with contemporary working-class culture. A closer look at the activity of individual pamphlet publishers, such as David Lauri Leivo, helps clarify the new status of song pamphlets throughout the whole cycle of their production, distribution, and consumption.

To begin with, even publishing short, inexpensive pamphlets targeting the workers’ audience was a business, and maintaining close contact with this audience was part of a successful business plan. Leivo was born into a rural working-class family in 1895 but moved to Helsinki to earn his living as a painter. During World War I, he became a small-scale entrepreneur when he founded his own painting and decorating firm. At the end of 1917 he also launched a small publishing house to release his song pamphlets and

⁶⁴ Malakias M. Vanhan piian lemmitty // Uusia Kupletti Lauuluja I. Pori, 1917. P. 7; A. R. Juorukellot // Nuorison lauluja. 1:nen vihko. Pori, 1917. Pp. 10–12.

⁶⁵ A. R. Miesten surulaulu kun naispuolue perustetaan // Nuorison lauluja. 1:nen vihko. Pori, 1917. Pp. 5–6.

⁶⁶ E.g., Vapaa Sana. 1917. March 7. No. 27. P. 3.

⁶⁷ Hakapää. Arkkiveisut. Pp. 221, 225–226; Anneli Asplund. Kirjallinen laulu // Anneli Asplund., et al. (Eds.). Suomen musiikin historia 8. Helsinki, 2006. P. 205.

other texts.⁶⁸ Leivo's publishing activity benefited from his connections with labor organizations and working-class cultural circles in Helsinki. Owing to these connections, he was able to print his song pamphlets at the *Työväen kirjapaino* (Workers' printing press), which was affiliated with the leading socialist newspaper, *Työmies* (The Workman). Leivo also advertised his song pamphlets in *Työmies* and other socialist newspapers.⁶⁹ However, he was not an active member of the SDP or a trade unionist himself, even if his songs conveyed leftist and anticlerical views.⁷⁰

Työväen kirjapaino in Helsinki was among the four most important printing presses of song pamphlets in the revolutionary years of 1917 and 1918. The other three were also located in the area of Red Finland, namely, in Tampere, Viipuri, and Pori. Together, these printing houses produced almost two-thirds of all the song pamphlets published during this period.⁷¹ For a press, the printing of song pamphlets was an easy business because the print run often reached thousands of copies while all the financial risks were carried by the authors.⁷² The February Revolution also diminished the risk of libel actions, which encouraged some publishers to allow the printing of explicitly subversive and blasphemous songs. This situation changed drastically after the Civil War, when militant leftist song pamphlets were eradicated from the market.

Few publishers of song pamphlets sustained permanent sales networks. Instead, they attended fairs and other public events, where they sold their work personally. Therefore, successful sales depended on one's advertising and even singing skills: the better a publisher sings his songs, the more customers will be attracted to his product from the crowd.⁷³ During 1917 and 1918, some producers such as Leivo also advertised their new publications in newspapers, advising customers where to buy them. In this case, the main target of ads were resellers who bought dozens or even hundreds of copies. These resellers included bookstores, and also peddlers who traveled the countryside from village to village offering song pamphlets for sale

⁶⁸ Helsingin ja ympäristön osote- ja ammattikalenteri. 1914. P. 642; *Työmies*. 1917. May 11. No. 125. P. 6; *Työmies*. 1917. December 23. No. 341. P. 15; KA. Valtiorikosoikeuksien arkisto (VRO). 38/280.

⁶⁹ *Sosialisti*. 1917. May 2. No. 99. P. 8; *Työ*. 1917. May 3. No. 100. P. 8; *Työmies*. 1917. May 13. No. 127. P. 7.

⁷⁰ KA. Valtiorikosoikeuksien arkisto (VRO). 38/280.

⁷¹ The other main printing presses of song pamphlets were Tampereen työväen kirjapaino in Tampere, Otto Andersinin kirjapaino in Pori, and Itä-Suomen Kirjapaino in Viipuri.

⁷² See Hakapää. *Arkkiveisut*. Pp. 231.

⁷³ *Ibid.* P. 232.

alongside other merchandise. In cities, some resellers recruited children to sell song pamphlets on the streets.⁷⁴

Singing was essential for selling a product as specific as song pamphlets: besides boosting sales, it was necessary to teach buyers the melodies of songs included in a pamphlet.⁷⁵ Judging by newspaper reports, the singing skills of pamphlet sellers varied greatly. Some were mocked for their miserable performance that could appeal only to the most ignorant audiences.⁷⁶ Others succeeded in standing up to comparison with the well-known nineteenth-century “verse master” Aleksander Leppänen, whom the writer Juhani Aho depicts in the following way: “Many songs he knew, and all of them he could sing in tune, whatever you would have asked for. And sometimes you did not even need to ask, for he himself understood which song and which tune pleased each person.”⁷⁷ This description suggests that an ideal song pamphlet presentation was an interactive show in which the performer adjusted the repertoire to the demands of the audience, taking into consideration the individuality and preferences of listeners. The audience, in turn, assessed the content of the pamphlet on sale by the performer’s communicative competence and singing.⁷⁸ One did not have to demonstrate exceptional vocal skills to gain success with listeners, but only to do one’s best in following the conventions of the genre. Part of the appeal of song pamphlet performances was based on a folksy way of singing accessible to the average person, which encouraged the subsequent singing of these songs by pamphlet owners at informal gatherings.⁷⁹

In 1917 and 1918, a typical occasion for the performance of songs from song pamphlets was a rally organized by a political organization or public association. Singing songs was an integral part of such public events, along with agitation speeches, poetry declamations, dancing, and the playing of party games. These activities affected each other and the complex experience of participants. Accordingly, singers had to adapt to the situation, for example, by selecting songs that broke the ice or resonated with the message

⁷⁴ Työmies. 1918. February 27. No. 56. P. 6.

⁷⁵ E.g., Hämeen Voima. 1914. January 31. No. 12. P. 2.

⁷⁶ Sanantuoja. 1917. February 10. No. 16. P. 4; Hakapää. Arkkiveisut. P. 244.

⁷⁷ Juhani Aho. Muuan markkinamies. Porvoo, 1915. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/13566/pg13566.html> (this and other web resources last accessed April 16, 2018).

⁷⁸ See Richard Bauman. Verbal Act as Performance. Prospect Heights, 1977. P. 11; Idem. Story, Performance, and Event. Cambridge, 1986. P. 3.

⁷⁹ Oushakine. Emotional Blueprints. P. 255.

of an agitation speech. Sometimes comical songs seemed suitable, and at other times songs instilled with militant fighting spirit seemed more appropriate. The affective power of songs was based on their ability to reshape relationships and the perception of events by establishing new metaphorical links, producing semantic shift and highlighting omitted or marginalized details. As Serguei Oushakine points out, songs were a legitimate outlet for expressing emotions in public and they helped organize and modulate feelings by recycling existing symbols and gestures.⁸⁰

Songs were not only performed at political events but also helped to design these events and hold them together. In her study on socialist agitation as performance, Anna Rajavuori identifies several performance strategies used by socialist agitators in early twentieth-century Finland. One strategy was to incorporate an agitation speech into a cultural event built around singing and dancing. These artistic performances helped to attract participants and build a sense of collectivity.⁸¹ The singing of songs from pamphlets worked well to attract a crowd if the performer was known to be competent.

Another performance strategy used by agitators was to trigger and share an emotional charge and thereby give meaning to an ideological message on an emotional level. The emotional repertoire of an agitation performance was wide: agitators sought not only to stir up hatred and a desire for revenge but also to evoke courage and solidarity. This could be done verbally, physically – for example, by weeping – or by engaging the audience to clap, boo, or sing together.⁸² All these methods of emotional arousal could be used by performers of songs from pamphlets and political agitators alike. However, the ultimate aim of the singer was different from that of the political agitator, as the singer's goal was to maximize the sales of his song pamphlets. On the other hand, it was not unusual when political agitators sang these songs themselves at rallies in workers' halls. This was necessary if no other people were present who had the experience and skills to entertain the audience.⁸³ This mixing of roles raises the question of whether the opposite situation was possible – that traveling song pamphlet sellers could adopt the role of political agitators at such events.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Pp. 249–250, 272.

⁸¹ Anna Rajavuori. *Esityksen politiikka: sosialistinen agitaation keski-suomalaisella maaseudulla 1906–1908*. Helsinki, 2017. P. 308.

⁸² Ibid. Pp. 308–309.

⁸³ Anna Rajavuori. *Oral Agitation through Written Sources: On the Study of Verbal Performances of the Early 20th Century Finland* // *RMN Newsletter*. 2013. No. 7. P. 82.

The involvement of some song pamphlet producers and sellers in revolutionary agitation would have serious repercussions for them in the wake of the Finnish Civil War. Some ended up in prison camps, where at least one died.⁸⁴ Imprisonment was also the fate of David Lauri Leivo, who was arrested by the Whites in Helsinki and placed in Iso-Mjölö prison camp in June 1918. When Leivo's case was brought before the Political Offense Court, the prosecutors used the pamphlets containing militant songs he had published as proof of his incitement to treason. Leivo defended himself in court by claiming that he had published song pamphlets only to earn some income and thus avoid enlisting with the Red Guard. The court found his story convincing and dismissed the charges, stating that Leivo had only "scribbled miserable verses, which were worthless and can hardly be considered dangerous."⁸⁵ The statement betrays the insufficient appreciation of song pamphlets as cultural products by the judges, who therefore regarded the pamphlets as more politically benign than newspapers.

By the time Leivo was released in July 1918, he had languished for a month in the prison camp, witnessing hunger, disease, and executions. Inspired by these grim experiences, he started to publish a satirical magazine, *Murikka*, in which he wrote satirical stories and songs about the reality of the prison camps and the injustices of postwar Finland. The magazine became a venue for him to express his political views, which he had done earlier in song pamphlets. In later years, Leivo remained in the business with his own publishing firm. During World War II, he even resumed publishing song pamphlets.⁸⁶ He was among the songwriters of the revolutionary period for whom the production of song pamphlets was a springboard to a literary career as a writer or journalist.

* * *

Although song pamphlets cannot be unequivocally identified as "voices from below," they offer a unique window into the popular culture of their time. With certain distortions and selectivity, they captured the news, rumors, and visions shared by many people, forging these fragments of worldview into comprehensive narratives in the form of songs. Speaking (or, rather, singing) in the language of emotions, these narratives knitted out of words

⁸⁴ One of the imprisoned songwriters was Vilho Itkonen, also known by his pseudonym, Koito. He died in a prison camp of Tampere in August 1918. War victims in Finland 1914–22 // <http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmahaku/input?hakuid=17106>.

⁸⁵ KA. Valtiorikosoikeuksien arkisto (VRO). 38/280.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

and music were effective in evoking common memories, emotions, and solidarity among the listeners.⁸⁷

Looking through the prism of Finnish song pamphlets that catered to the lower-class majority of the population, Russian revolution appears as a decisive factor in the transformation of Finnish society. Specifically, the February Revolution was depicted in popular song as an epoch-making event and a game changer. By contrast, the Bolshevik Revolution in October received far less attention from songwriters. Political dynamics in the former Russian Empire was affecting the imagination of songwriters in the fall of 1917 indirectly, through the radicalization of political rhetoric within the SDP leadership and the party press, which, in turn, translated into more militant texts distributed by song pamphleteers. In 1918 the Finnish Civil War inspired popular songwriters to revive the “Russian” theme in their songs. Only, now it referred to a domestic – real or imagined – problem, embodied by the figures of the Russian soldier and his Finnish girlfriend as symbols of external and internal threat to the nation’s independence and unity.

Judging by the song pamphlets published during 1917, many Finlanders still perceived themselves as subjects of the Russian Empire and were less inspired by the idea of Finnish independence than by the prospects of democratization and social equality. It was not until the songs of the Civil War period that the idea of the deep political connection between Finns and Russians gave way to the idea of a sovereign Finland threatened by an eastern enemy. Some of these songs also promoted the ideal of a socialist Finland, but this theme became taboo after the defeat of the Red Guards. Still, the revolutionary songs of the earlier time continued to nourish an alternative political culture that was perceived as subversive by the White political establishment, which was seeking to stabilize the fledgling state on its own terms.

SUMMARY

This article examines the way in which the widespread printed collections of songs reflected the developing revolutionary situation and fuelled political imagination in Finland during the years 1917 and 1918. The analysis shows that the Russian February Revolution of 1917 and the Finnish Civil War of

⁸⁷ Cf. Pearl. *Creating a Culture of Revolution*. Pp. 148–149.

1918 became key events that stimulated the proliferation of popular song pamphlets and influenced the content of the songs. Acting as an affective medium, the song pamphlets contested old forms of political legitimacy and reinforced ideas of class solidarity, national unity, and ethnic stereotypes.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье исследуется, как широко распространенные брошюры, в которых публиковались сборники финских песен, отражали развитие революционных событий и сами подпитывали политическое воображение в Финляндии в 1917–1918 гг. Автор показывает, что Февральская революция в России и финская гражданская война 1918 г. стали ключевыми событиями “аффективного опыта”, стимулировавшими распространение сборников песен и влиявшими на их содержание. В качестве аффективного медиума, сборники песен оспаривали старые формы политической легитимности и укрепляли идеалы классовой солидарности и национального единства, а также этнические стереотипы.